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AUDITOR-CONTROLLER

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TO: Supervisor Don Knabe, Chairman  
Supervisor Gloria Molina  
Supervisor Yvonne B. Burke  
Supervisor Zev Yaroslavsky  
Supervisor Michael D. Antonovich

FROM: J. Tyler McCauley   
Auditor-Controller

SUBJECT: **GROUP HOME PROGRAM MONITORING REPORT – PHOENIX  
HOUSES OF LOS ANGELES, INC., PHOENIX ACADEMY LAKEVIEW  
TERRACE**

**Background**

We have completed a review of Phoenix Academy Lakeview Terrace (Group Home or Agency) operated by Phoenix Houses Of Los Angeles, Inc. The Group Home contracts with the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) and the Probation Department (Probation).

Phoenix Academy Lakeview Terrace is a 140-bed facility, which provides care for children, ages 13-18, who exhibit behavioral, social, and emotional difficulties. At the time of the monitoring visit, the Agency was providing services for nine DCFS children, 75 Probation children, and 39 privately placed children. Phoenix Academy Lakeview Terrace is located in the Third District.

**Scope of Review**

The purpose of the review was to determine whether the Agency was providing the services outlined in their Program Statement. Additionally, the review covered basic child safety and licensing issues, and included an evaluation of the Agency's Program Statement, internal policies and procedures, child case records, facility inspections, and interviews with nine children placed in the Group Home at the time of the review. Interviews with the residents were designed to obtain their perspectives on the program services provided by the Agency, and to ensure adherence to the Foster Youth Bill of Rights.

**Summary of Findings**

Generally, the Agency was providing the services outlined in their Program Statement. However, the Agency needs to make repairs to its facility; provide residents with extra pillows; properly store food; create Needs and Services Plans that have detailed, measurable, and achievable goals; provide documentation to show residents' and their placement workers' participation in the development and update of Needs and Services Plans; provide a sufficient number of age-appropriate recreational activities for all residents; include residents in the planning of the recreational activities; restrict residents from participating in recreational activities on a fair and just basis; maintain current court authorization for residents receiving psychotropic medications; and provide life books for all residents.

Attached is a detailed report of the review findings.

**Review of Report**

We discussed our report with the Agency's management. The Agency's management is required to provide a corrective action plan to the Children's Group Home Ombudsman within 15 business days from the receipt of this report. We thank the management and staff for their cooperation during our review.

If you have any questions, please contact me, or have your staff contact DeWitt Roberts at (626) 293-1101.

JTM:DR:CC:asl

c: David E. Janssen, Chief Administrative Officer  
David Sanders, Ph.D., Director, DCFS  
Richard Shumsky, Chief Probation Officer  
Mary Kay, Executive Director, Phoenix Academy Lakeview Terrace  
Violet Varona-Lukens, Executive Officer  
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**Phoenix Houses of Los Angeles, Inc.  
Phoenix Academy Lakeview Terrace  
11600 Eldridge Ave.  
Lakeview Terrace, CA 91342  
Phone: (818) 896-1121  
License No.: 191222731  
Rate Classification Levels: 5 and 12**

**I. Facility and Environment**

*(Facility Based - No Sample)*

**Method of assessment – Observation and resident interviews**

**Sample size for resident interviews: Nine**

**Comments:**

Phoenix Academy Lakeview Terrace Group Home (Group Home or Agency) is a large facility located in a residential community. The Group Home is clean, spacious, and comfortable. The Group Home is well maintained, nicely landscaped, and blends well with the other homes on the block. There were no observable safety hazards.

The interior of the Group Home is generally neat and clean. The residents' bedrooms are comfortable and clean. The residents are able to personalize their bedrooms by posting pictures and personal items on the walls.

There are some areas that need improvement. Specifically, the paint on the upper portion of the walls in the dining room is chipped. In bedroom number 15 in the Ascension Unit, the ceiling tiles are broken. Some of the window blinds in the same unit are warped and missing slats.

Residents expressed an overall satisfaction with their rooms and the facility. However, residents stated that they are allowed only one pillow per resident.

The Group Home has a variety of athletic and educational supplies, exercise equipment, video games, board games, books, and computers.

While there is a sufficient supply of frozen food, meat, canned goods, bakery items, and fresh fruit, some of the cooked meats in the refrigerator were not dated or covered.

**Recommendations**

- 1. Phoenix Academy Group Home management:**
  - a. Repair and paint the walls in the dining room.**

- b. Replace or repair all broken ceiling tiles in bedroom number 15 in the Ascension Unit.**
- c. Replace or repair all broken window blinds in the Ascension Unit.**
- d. Provide residents with extra pillows.**
- e. Properly date and store foods.**

## **II. Program Services**

**Method of assessment – Review of relevant documents and resident interviews**

**Sample size for resident interviews: Nine**

### **Comments:**

The residents meet the Agency's population criteria as outlined in their Program Statement. Residents received a complete initial diagnostic assessment after being admitted into the Agency's program.

The Needs and Services Plans (NSPs) are current. Although the NSPs are specifically designed for each resident, the goals are not detailed, measurable, and achievable. There was no documentation to support the residents' and their placement workers' participation in the development or update of the NSPs.

The quarterly reports are detailed, comprehensive, and address the children's therapeutic, residential, educational, and social goals.

The residents are receiving clinical services, in a variety of therapeutic milieus. In addition to group and individual therapy, behavioral and psychological treatments are provided on a regular basis.

### **Recommendations**

- 1. Phoenix Academy Lakeview Terrace management:**
  - a. Create Needs and Services Plans that have detailed, measurable, and achievable goals.**
  - b. Provide documentation to show residents' and their placement workers' participation in the development and update of the Needs and Services Plans.**

### **III. Educational and Emancipation Services**

#### **Method of assessment – Review of relevant documents and resident interviews**

**Sample size for resident interviews: Nine**

#### **Comments:**

The Agency provides and documents the education and emancipation services to its residents. Copies of progress reports, report cards, and other school correspondence are maintained in the residents' files. The residents stated that the Group Home provides adequate educational support, educational resources, and daily cognitive stimulation.

The Agency's program includes the development of residents' daily living, self-help, and survival skills such as cooking, shopping and transportation.

Residents are offered the opportunity to participate in emancipation and vocational programs as appropriate.

Residents are able to work and manage their own money.

#### **Recommendations**

**There are no recommendations for this section.**

### **IV. Recreation and Activities**

#### **Method of assessment – Review of relevant documents and resident interviews**

**Sample size for resident interviews: Nine**

#### **Comments:**

The Agency provides its residents opportunities to participate in recreational activities. The residents expressed satisfaction with the recreational activities and stated that the recreation schedules are followed.

Residents reported that they are unfairly restricted from participating in the activities because the entire "unit" of residents is grounded if one resident in that unit misbehaves. Residents stated that since someone often misbehaves, most residents only participate in a very limited number of outings. The residents also stated that they do not participate in the planning of the activities. This was discussed with management who stated that their policy would be revised.

The Group Home utilizes the local community organizations for recreation and program resources. The children reported that they are able to participate in self-selected activities within the limits of the program.

Transportation is provided to and from some of the activities.

**Recommendations**

**2. Phoenix Academy Group Home management:**

- a. Ensure all residents have access to a sufficient amount of age-appropriate recreational activities.**
- b. Only restrict misbehaving residents from participating in recreational activities.**
- c. Include residents in the planning of the recreational activities.**

**V. Psychotropic Medication**

**Method of assessment – Review of relevant documents for 29 cases**

Three of the 29 residents being prescribed psychotropic medication do not have current court authorizations. Four of the 29 residents are not routinely seen by the prescribing psychiatrist.

Medication logs are properly maintained.

**Recommendations**

**3. Phoenix Academy Group Home management:**

- a. Maintain current court authorizations for the three noted residents receiving psychotropic medications.**
- b. Provide monthly psychiatric and medication reviews for the four noted residents prescribed psychotropic medications.**

## **VI. Personal Rights**

### **Method of assessment – Resident interviews**

**Sample size for resident interviews: Nine**

#### **Comments:**

Residents expressed satisfaction with the Agency and its staff. Residents participate in an initial orientation and the Group Home's policies and procedures are posted. Residents reported that they feel safe in the Group Home and that there is no interference with their daily living functions.

Residents reported satisfaction with the taste of the food and with their ability to participate in menu development. They reported that there is sufficient staff supervision and expressed satisfaction with the quality of their interactions with staff. Residents feel there is at least one staff member they can easily talk to and trust.

Residents reported that they are assigned chores to complete on a daily basis that are reasonable and not too demanding. Residents are able to have visitors and make and receive personal telephone calls. They are permitted to contact their social workers, probation officers, attorneys, and family members as needed. Residents are able to attend weekly religious services of their choice and feel that the Agency is respectful of their cultural lifestyles. The Agency allows the residents to celebrate holidays.

Residents reported that the discipline policies are consistently enforced and that there are fair and appropriate consequences for inappropriate behavior.

Residents are aware of their right to refuse medication.

### **Recommendations**

**There are no recommendations for this section.**

## **VII. Clothing and Allowance**

### **Method of assessment – Review of relevant documents and resident interviews**

**Sample size for resident interviews: Nine**

#### **Comments:**

The Agency provides appropriate clothing, items of necessity, and allowances to the residents. The Group Home supplies its residents with the required \$50 monthly

clothing allowance and the residents are given the opportunity to select their own clothes. Clothing provided to residents is of good quality and of sufficient quantity.

The Agency provides residents with the required minimum base allowance, which they are able to increase according to the Agency's behavioral system. Residents are permitted to spend their allowances as they choose.

The Agency provides residents with adequate personal care items and adequate storage.

Residents are not provided with an opportunity to maintain photo albums/life books.

**Recommendation**

- 4. Phoenix Academy Group Home management provide life books for all residents.**